

program that could do it faster, cheaper, and more efficiently reopening these 34 beds. This amendment is not anti-community based programs, just the opposite. It is an affirmation of the community programs in a balanced mental health delivery system but as a part of the balance recognized that the institutional side of the picture cannot be ignored either. There is a gap in the community based side but there is also equal critical gap in the institutional side, a gap in either side places a greater burden on the remaining health delivery system. This institutional gap will not go away simply because we wish it to. It needs to be addressed now, not two years from now. The dangerous incidents involving the mentally ill will occur whether we are prepared for it or not. It is not something we can put on the back burner for a more convenient day or hour. If you will look at the Lutheran plans move to redirect mental patients, one of the major hospitals in Omaha, Lutheran Medical Center, officials said money they are taking steps in...to redirect psychiatric emergency patients to place them where officials say they properly belong, Douglas County Hospital Community Mental Health Center. There are not even beds there. Lutheran Medical Center, which includes a psychiatric hospital has decided to act on its own because more mental emergency cases are coming there, said Gary Petersen. Lutheran Medical Center's emergency room is not set up to handle psychiatric emergencies. Douglas County Hospital's Community Mental Center has a contract to provide emergency psychiatric care, but County Hospital officials have said that the center does not have enough beds. Joanna Lloyd, Mental Health Region V program director, said Lutheran Medical Center's letter and the issue of psychiatric emergencies will be discussed at the regional center board meeting. The psychiatric emergency situation was bad enough before but now it is really deteriorating, she said. Psychiatric emergencies often involve people with serious mental illness who need long-term treatment either in a hospital or an outpatient setting. And if you will turn it over and you will read a letter from the President of Lutheran Hospital. "Having just learned that Governor Orr has vetoed the bill appropriating funds for 34 additional beds at the Norfolk Regional Center, I want to express my concern to you. Our current system of caring for the chronically mentally ill in Nebraska is dangerously overburdened as it now exists. While the additional capacity at Norfolk would have been utilized almost immediately and taken by itself, would not have begun to address the problem, we felt it could have helped. Obviously, there is also a significant need for additional inpatient capacity at Douglas County Mental